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ABSTRACT

Teaching about potential nuclear conflict is increasing in schools, colleges, and universities. A group of faculty from many universities across the United States has formed United Campuses to Prevent Nuclear War (UCAM) to produce teaching materials and publish summaries of courses on nuclear war. One such course at Lafayette College (Pennsylvania) is a senior colloquium dealing with the nuclear arms race in a multidisciplinary manner. A recently published unit of study for adolescents is a major effort to tell the truth about instruments of mass destruction. Not everybody is enthusiastic about these approaches; one correspondent to the editor of the "Washington Post" describes them as very disturbing events and counsels anti-nuclear activists to leave children alone. The United Nations has started a campaign to establish a network of organizations aimed at peace and disarmament. Many such organizations already exist; their participation in the UN campaign must be guided by the nature of the organization. Adult educators have a special role. They are part of existing non-governmental networks that can transcend national boundaries. As their part in the UN campaign, adult educators must build bridges between different countries and cultures, develop suitable materials and creative ideas for promoting understanding, and establish real people contacts. (DC)

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# POTENTIAL NUCLEAR CONFLICT: ATTENTION ADULT EDUCATORS

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## POTENTIAL NUCLEAR CONFLICT: ATTENTION ADULT EDUCATORS

Recently there is evident a growing amount of teaching in schools, colleges, and universities devoted to the subject of potential nuclear conflict. A group of faculty from many universities across the United States, all of whom participated in the nationwide November 11 Convocations on the Threat of Nuclear War (1982), have formed a new organization: United Campuses to Prevent Nuclear War (UCAM). Consisting of scientists and non-scientists, the organization is collaborating with scientist groups such as the Union of Concerned Scientists to initiate and produce materials for courses and campus convocations.

Among other activities, UCAM, which now has chapters at more than 500 colleges, publishes summaries of courses on nuclear war taught at a mounting number of colleges and universities. Just last March, the University of Pennsylvania held a month-long series of lectures and other events entitled "Toward Preventing Nuclear War." The series was open to the public. The president of the university said it "signals a return by the American university to its mission of educating society at large."

You might be interested in the nature of these courses. An example can be found at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania:

> This senior colloquium deals with the nuclear arms race (particularly the Soviet-American competition) in a multi-disciplinary manner. Starting with the historical arms races leading to World War I and World War II, the courses deal with the Manhattan Project and the decision to bomb Hiroshima. Following a number of sessions dwelling on the technical aspects of nuclear weaponry, the colloquium proceeds to dwell with Mutual Assured Destruction, its development, rationale, and proposed alternatives to it. The colloquium then covers economic explanations to the arms race and deals with psychological approaches to the race and conflict resolution in general. The impact of nuclear weapons on music, literature, and the plastic arts is reviewed through encounter with a variety of works in these fields. The course concludes with a treatment of moral and religious dimensions of war, in general, and the arms race, in particular, and an intensive class debate on solutions to this most important of man's problems.

**A Course for Adolescent Youth**

In my opinion, one of the most significant educational approaches to the threat of nuclear war is a unit of study just published. In the words of Dr. John E. Mack, professor of psychiatry at the Harvard University Medical School:

> It is a major effort to tell adolescents the truth about instruments of mass destruction. This educational unit provides a sound body of information on the evolution of the nuclear arms race, the nature and consequences of using nuclear weapons, and the new ways that conflicts among nations must be resolved if life on the planet is to survive. By teaching this unit, educators can show young people that adults care about their future and are willing to join with them in preserving the continuity of human life. Educators can and should be models of responsible adults who are willing to confront the realities of the nuclear threat and to act to secure the future.

Not everybody is enthusiastic about this and other approaches to the threat of nuclear war. A dose of the reality of opposing views is injected into our considerations by a letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*:

> Some very disturbing events are taking place today in America: Children are being brainwashed by pacifistic, antinuclear and left-wing groups throughout the country, and used as sounding boards for the freeze and disarmament policies advocated by adult activists.
>
> On an issue where even adults are easily misled by oversimplified claims (i.e., war vs. peace, rather than different approaches to securing peace) young children are seen on TV with increasing frequency, parroting lines fed to them by antinuclear groups in schools, homes, churches or political organizations. One young girl in Maine was encouraged to write to Yuri Andropov on "peace" and, of course, the predictable answer of lovable, peace-loving old Uncle Yuri was widely publicized by the media.



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> The most serious intellectual misuse, or abuse, of children lies in two other organized and vicious propaganda attempts. One was the recent try by the National Education Association to introduce into public school curricula a peace and nuclear-policy course, which was supplied by leading pacifist and antinuclear activist groups. The second was the proposal by the governing body of Catholic parochial schools to introduce the pastoral letter of the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops on nuclear policy, a generally pacifistic and antinuclear statement, as part of the curricula of Catholic schools.
>
> Enough of this propaganda, freezeniks! Push your antinuclear, anti-American, pro-Soviet garbage on American adults if you will, but leave children alone. Stop using them to do your dirty work. (April 1983)

**A Potential Network Exists**

The United Nation's written aim "to *establish* a network of organizations, institutions, and media working toward the achievement of peace and disarmament" could well be rewritten *to relate to*. There are a good many resource organizations in existence. They are of many kinds: scientists, physicians, teachers, students, churches, members of Congress, lawyers, women's groups, *and* adult educators and associations. More specifically, there are such organizations as Physicians for Social Responsibility, Global Education Associates, and Peace Links (Women Against Nuclear War). The nature of each organization's participation in the UN campaign surely should be guided by the nature of that organization. What is it that is natural for it to do? For us, what is our particular "stock-in-trade"? our expertise?

**A Special Role for Adult Educators**

Let me suggest a few of our resources. First, there is an urgency about this matter that calls for adult learning. We need adult education for people who now carry responsibilities and powers of citizenship. Second, we are all a part of existing networks that can be utilized; these include our occupational groups, informal associations, families, political parties, churches. And even beyond all of this, our focus of interest, as adult educators, is really the crucial point. *Basically, in seeking to achieve international security, we confront a learning problem of immense proportions. We are dealing with a fundamental issue of relationships.* We just don't understand each other. And lack of understanding instrumented by high technology can escalate conflict to nuclear dimensions.

The only long-term answer is some kind of accommodation. We are early in the learning curve for this kind of approach. Organizations are multiplying, interest is developing, and motivations can be tapped. We need to do some bridge-building between countries and different cultures. We need to develop suitable materials. We need more "primers" like Molander's on the Russians. We need new, creative ideas for promoting understanding. There is no substitute for real people contacts--teachers, doctors, retired people, business people, children, labor unionists. And these contacts will be most fruitful as they go beyond tourism and sightseeing to *common involvement in tasks of significance.*

We have the capacity here to initiate such efforts as our part in the UN campaign. It is a natural way for adult educators to go. At a time when tensions exist among governments, we have particular opportunities and responsibilities as non-governmental organizations to transcend national boundaries. Interesting that one of the great military leaders of World War II saw that so clearly:

> One who has witnessed the horror and the lingering sadness of war - is one who knows that another war could utterly destroy this civilization which has been so slowly and painfully built over thousands of years . . . .
>
> I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than are governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it. (Dwight D. Eisenhower)

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor
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